

WI-347
William H. Knowles House
Sharptown
Private

c. 1857, c. 1890

Historically identified as the William H. Knowles house, this prominent two-story, tee-shaped dwelling marks the corner of Main and State streets in the center of Sharptown. Enriched with an usually elaborate front porch that wraps around to the south side, the house actually dates from two distinct periods, the mid nineteenth century and the late nineteenth century. The northern two bays of the tee-shaped dwelling date around 1857 when George R. Knowles, a ship captain, purchased a small parcel of "Royal Exchange" from William K. and Sarah E. Elzey. A few Greek Revival details verify its mid nineteenth century date. The wide corner pilasters that define the northern corners of the house and a two-panel door to the attic are the few original finish elements that remain from the original construction. Around 1890-1900, William H. Knowles restyled his parents house in Victorian taste by adding a sizable cross wing oriented on a right angle to initial structure. The mid century house was refurbished at the same time.

William H. Knowles was a prominent businessman in Sharptown during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His first commercial venture was an association with W. W. Selby in a firm known as Knowles and Selby, which was established in 1885 and concentrated on undertaking and buildings. He entered into a larger concern in 1895 under the firm W. H. Knowles & Co., which dealt in the

wholesale marketing of nails, tacks, wires, crate hinges and hasps, as a wide variety of crates and baskets. The company's manufacturing plant was located along the Nanticoke River, and firm actually owned two wharves, one of which was used for sailing vessels and the other for a steamboat landing.

MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN INFORMATION

RESOURCE NAME: William H. Knowles House

MHT INVENTORY NUMBER: WI-347

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA

1. Historic Period Theme(s): Architecture

2. Geographic Orientation: Eastern Shore

3. Chronological/Development Period(s): Agricultural-Industrial Transition
1815-1870

4. Resource Type(s): Single-family dwelling

**Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

**MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Survey No. WI-347

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic William H. Knowles House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 701 Main Street ☐ not for publication

city, town Sharptown ☐ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Wicomico

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name James and Eileen Matlack

street & number 701 Main Street telephone no.:

city, town Sharptown state and zip code Maryland 21861

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court Map 400, P. 243
liber 1020

street & number Wicomico County Courthouse folio 768

city, town Salisbury state MD 21801

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. WI-347

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The William H. Knowles house is located at 701 Main Street in the southern residential district of Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland. The two-story asymmetrically planned frame house faces southwest with the principal gable oriented on a northwest/southeast axis.

Estimated to date to the third and four quarters of the nineteenth century, the two-story, tee-shaped frame dwelling is comprised of a two-story, side hall/parlor house dating around 1850-60 along with a sizable late 19th century cross wing addition that transformed the house into an asymmetrical, Queen Anne inspired residence. The entire structure is supported by a low brick foundation, and the exterior is clad with a combination of vinyl siding over plain weatherboards and fishscale shingles within the gable ends. The medium gable pitched roofs, finished with extended eaves, are covered with asphalt shingles. Attached to the back of the main block is a two-story kitchen wing.

The southwest (main) elevation is an uneven three-bay facade with a projecting pavilion on the south side and the entrance centrally located. The front door and first floor windows are sheltered by an elaborate turned post front porch that wraps around to the south side of the house. The front entrance, located in the second bay from the north, features a mid 19th century surround and a late 19th century Victorian door distinguished by colored glass panes. The adjacent windows have replaced with single-pane sash. The front wall of the projecting bay is defined by a three-sided bay window features knee wall exterior panels and single-pane sash windows. The turned post porch is enriched with a variety of sawn brackets and decorative panels carved with a sunburst pattern. Centered on the roof is a cross gable that marks the entrance bay. The front of the gable features pierced sawnwork. Missing from the front porch is a turned baluster handrail. Fixed to the southwest corner of the front wall is a wide paneled pilaster that identifies the corner of the mid 19th century dwelling. A series of brackets stretches across length of the house under a boxed cornice. The first and second floors are lighted by single-pane sash windows. The projecting pavilion features fishscale shingles within the gable end, and the extended eave has exposed rafter ends. The peak of the gable is embellished with decorative Victorian sawnwork.

Dominating the north gable end of the original house is late 19th century, two-and-a-half story, five-sided bay pavilion topped by a cross gabled hip roof. The cornice is trimmed with a series of sawn brackets and each corner has a drop pendant and turned spindle work. The south side of the pavilion is marked by paired single-pane sash windows on each floor, while single one-over-one sash windows mark each side. The two-story pavilion is incorporated under the eave of the main block, which has a Victorian peak decoration like the front gable. The rear (southeast) corner of the main block is also defined by a wide paneled pilaster.

(Continued)

8. Significance

Survey No. WI-347

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Historically identified as the William H. Knowles house, this prominent two-story, tee-shaped dwelling marks the corner of Main and State streets in the center of Sharptown. Enriched with an usually elaborate front porch that wraps around to the south side, the house actually dates from two distinct periods, the mid nineteenth century and the late nineteenth century. The northern two bays of the tee-shaped dwelling date around 1857 when George R. Knowles, a ship captain, purchased a small parcel of “Royal Exchange” from William K. and Sarah E. Elzey.¹ A few Greek Revival details verify its mid nineteenth century date. The wide corner pilasters that define the northern corners of the house and a two-panel door to the attic are the few original finish elements that remain from the original construction. Around 1890-1900, William H. Knowles restyled his parents house in Victorian taste by adding a sizable cross wing oriented on a right angle to initial structure. The mid century house was refurbished at the same time.

William H. Knowles was a prominent businessman in Sharptown during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His first commercial venture was an association with W. W. Selby in a firm known as Knowles and Selby, which was established in 1885 and concentrated on undertaking and buildings.² He entered into a larger concern in 1895 under the firm W. H. Knowles & Co., which dealt in the wholesale marketing of nails, tacks, wires, crate hinges and hasps, as a wide variety of crates and baskets.³ The company’s manufacturing plant was located along the Nanticoke River, and firm actually owned two wharves, one of which was used for sailing vessels and the other for a steamboat landing.

The house deserves listing in *Category A* due to its elaborate and distinctive architectural character.

¹ Somerset County Land Record, LW 5/153, 23 March 1857.

² *Portrait and Biographical Record on the Eastern Shore of Maryland*. Chapman Publishing Company: New York and Chicago, 1898, p. 771.

³ *Ibid.*

7.1 DESCRIPTION

William H. Knowles House, WI-347
Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland

The south side of the house is a long uneven elevation of single-pane sash windows and the wraparound turned post porch. Situated atop the roof is a pair of cross gables sheathed with fishscale shingles. The east end of the porch is enclosed with a frame knee wall and glass panes.

The interior of the composite house retains a mixture of mid and late 19th-century woodwork, although the surviving elements of the original house have been diminished to relatively few pieces. The mid 19th century house followed a side hall/parlor or one-room plan. A 19th-century vertical board partition separates the current entrance from the living room. A single piece of beaded edge baseboard remains against the partition wall. Door and windows are trimmed with Victorian moldings. The present staircase rises between the front and back rooms of the late 19th century addition. Fixed atop the staircase is a turned newel post, a molded handrail, and a series of slender square baluster set on a diagonal to achieve a diamond shape.

Located on the second floor of the original house is an enclosed attic staircase that survives with a two-panel Greek Revival door. The unfinished attic reveals confirming evidence of the building sequence. At the head of the attic staircase is the former gable end tie beam, which has a series of empty pocket mortises in its top surface. The dimensions and finish of the rafters in the two sections distinctly differ, another indication of the generational gap in construction.

Standing on the northeast side of the house is a single-story gable roofed garage sheathed with a tin roof and plain weatherboard siding. The gable front wall is pierced by a wide door opening. The eaves of the building are extended and the soffits remain open.

WI-347
William H. Knowles House
701 Main Street
Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland
Chain of title

Map 400, Parcel 243

1020/768 William C. Lamond, Jr.
Ruth A. Lamond

to

8/31/1984 James R. Matlack
Margaret E. Matlack

Southerly side of State Street, Easterly side of Main Street
Plat JWTS 618/303

JWTS 618/301 Samuel W. Owens
Bertie M. Owens

to

9/25/1965 William C. Lamond, Jr.
Ruth A. Lamond

JWTS 580/465 Floyd Milligan

to

3/24/1904 Samuel W. Owens
Bertie M. Owens

Last Will and Testament of
Luther W. Marine

to

grandson, Floyd Milligan
Estate No. 5755

WI-347
William H. Knowles
701 Main Street
Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland
Chain of title continued

Page 2

IDT 184/453 Purnell T. White, and wife, Sallie J. White

to

10/12/1934 Luther W. Marine
.87 acre

IDT 184/451 L. Atwood Bennett, trustee

to

10/11/1934 Purnell T. White

\$900 Whereas By a Decree of Circuit Court, 7/30/1934
 No. 4596 Chancery

Being the remainder of the land conveyed to William
H. Knowles

1. from W. R. Elzey et al., 11/4/1911, JCK 107/509

2. from Hiram A. Windsor, 4/9/1902, JTT 33/69

3. from Sallie E. Elzey, 2/21/1893, JTT 11/46

JCK 107/509 William B. Elzey, et al.

to

11/4/1911 William H. Knowles

WI-347

Page 2

William H. Knowles House

701 Main Street

Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland

Chain of title continued

JTT 33/69

Hiram A. Windsor
Minnie E. Windsor

to

4/9/1902

William H. Knowles

\$100 1 acre-mentions the William Knowles lot

JTT 11/46

Sallie B. Elzey of Sharptown

to

2/21/1893

William H. Knowles of Sharptown

\$125.00 3 7/10 acres of land called Royal Exchange

Somerset County

Land Record

LW 5/153

William K. Elzey
Sarah E. Elzey

to

3/23/1857

George R. Knowles

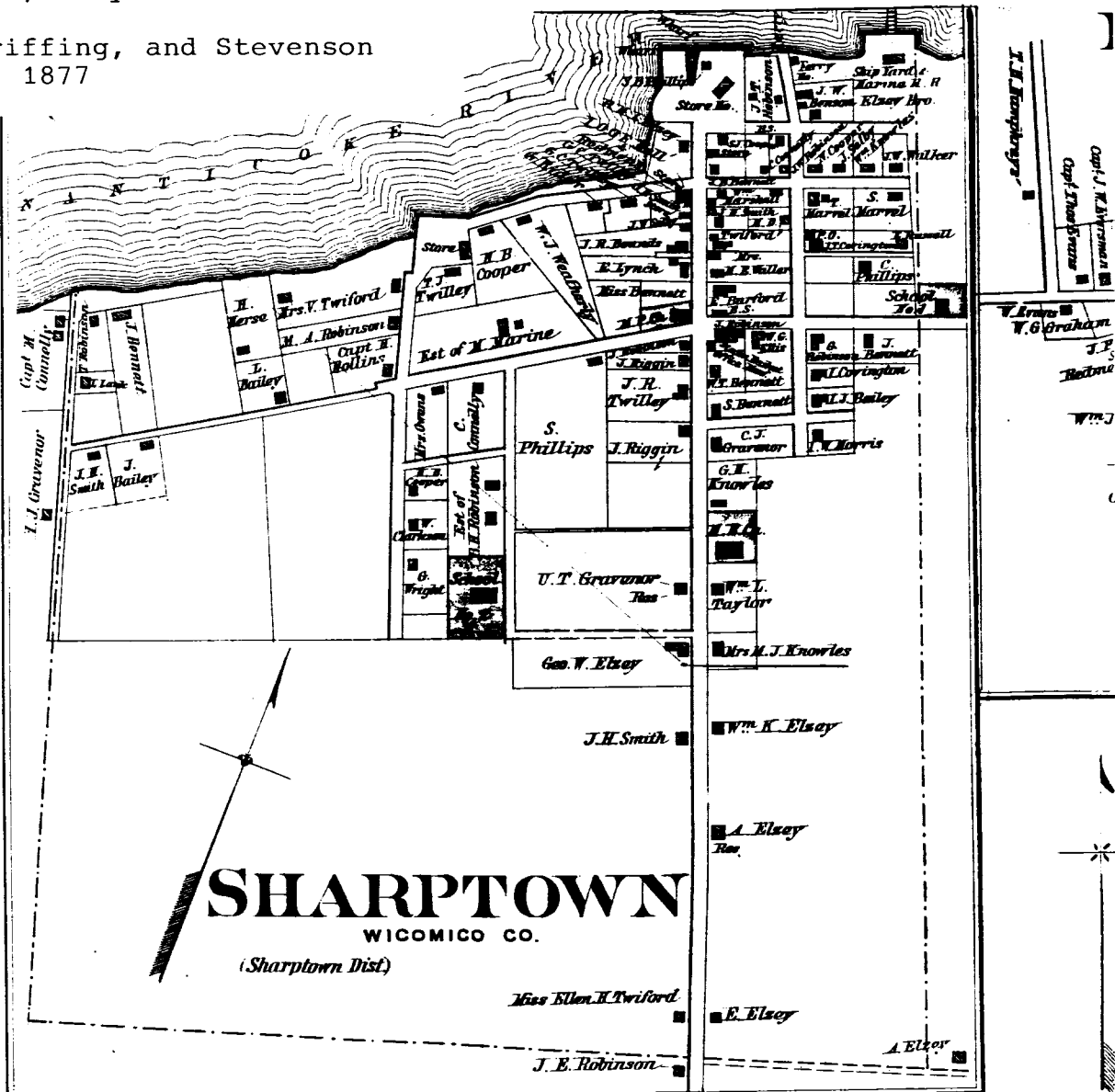
\$50 "Royal Exchange"

WI-347

William H. Knowles House
Sharptown, Maryland

Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson
Atlas 1877

1110th
M.E. Ch.
Res. sh.
Ver.
hols
Res.
to Williams
Geo. W. Leonard
Col. Wm. J.
Leonard
J. Leonard

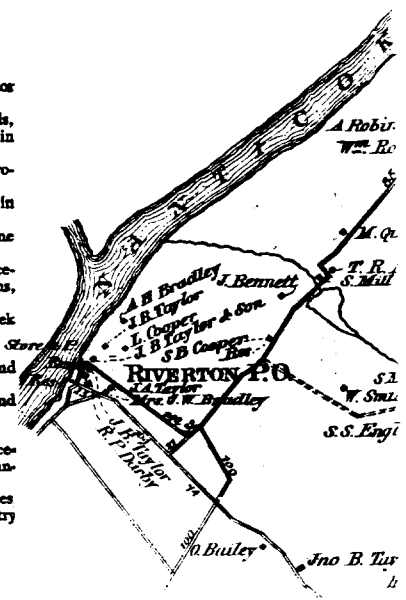


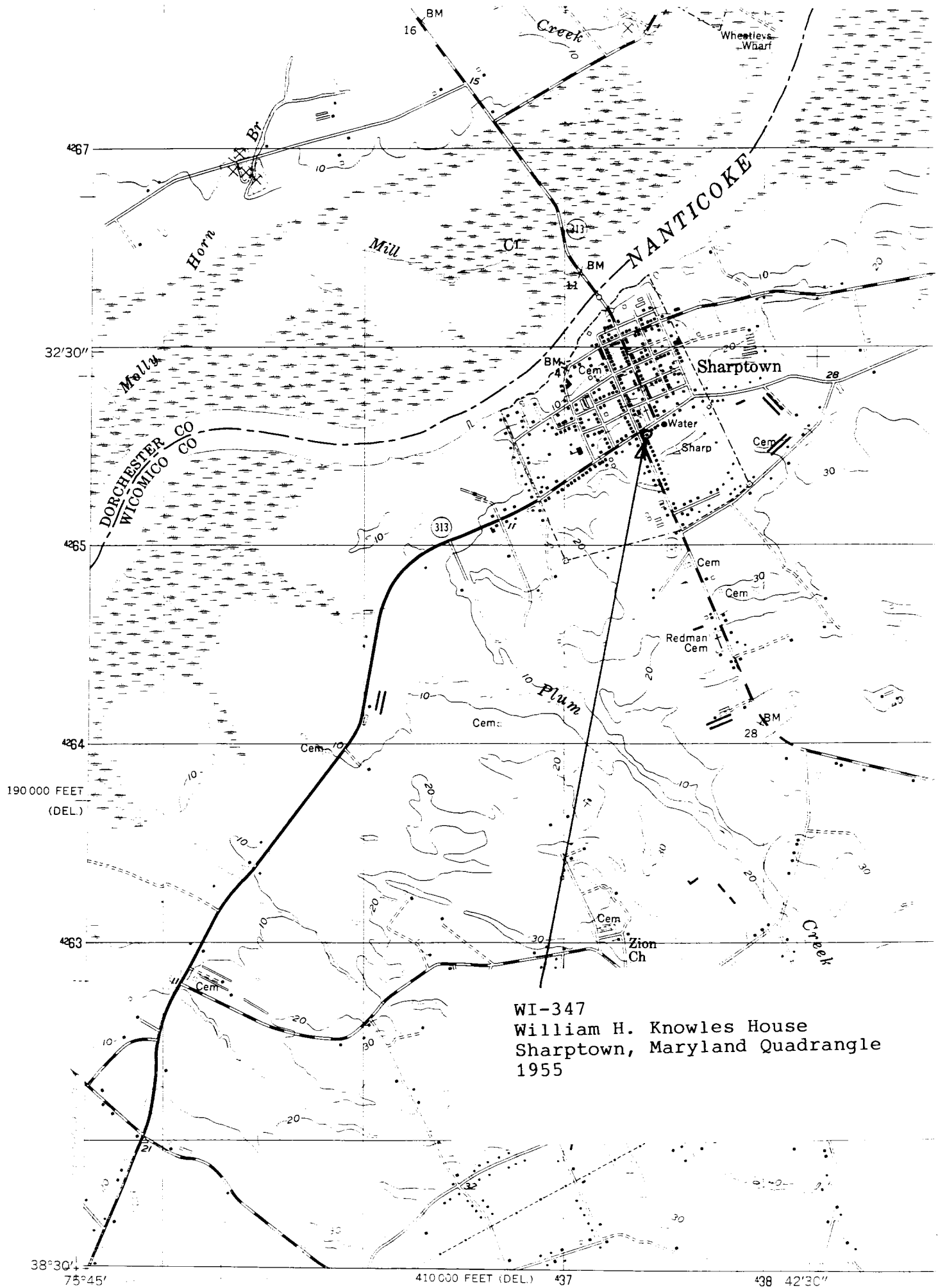
SHARPTOWN BUSINESS REFERENCES.

JOHN H. SMITH, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and a General variety of Goods.
THOS. J. TWILLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
J. R. TWILLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions, and a variety of Goods too tedious to mention.
S. J. COOPER, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country town.
JNO. ROBINSON AND BRO., Manufacturers of Fruit Crates and Baskets, Grape and Peach Baskets and Boxes, Deck Plugs, Trunnel Wedges, &c. Also Wood and Iron Turning, Scroll Sawing, Surface Planing, &c., done to order.
EDWARD BURFORD, Blacksmith. Ship and Country Smithing done to order.
WESLEY CLARKSON, Dealer in Groceries and Whiskies at the Wharf, Sharptown.
JOHN B. TAYLOR AND SON, Dealers in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and general Merchandise, Riverton Wicomico Co., Md.
JOHN W. ROBINSON, Ship-carpenter and Proprietor of Smith-shop. All kinds of work both ship and country, done to order.
R. M. L. ELZEY AND BRO., Proprietors of the Sharptown Marine Railway. Ship-building, Repairing, Graving, &c., done at the shortest notice. All kinds of Material furnished at reasonable rates.
C. J. GRAVENOR, Ship-carpenter and Sail-maker.
W. I. J. PHILLIPS, Ship-carpenter.
JOSEPH H. MANN, Physician and Surgeon.
RICHARD P. DARBY, County Commissioner.
J. B. & J. E. TAYLOR, Dealers in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions, and a General variety of Goods, at the Sharptown Store.

BARREN CREEK BUSINESS REFERENCES.

LEVIN M. WILSON, Farmer and Tax Collector for Wicomico Co.
THOMAS B. TAYLOR, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries and all Kinds of Goods usually kept in a Country Store.
J. B. ARMSTRONG, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, &c.
L. M. VINCENT, Wheelwright. All Works in his line done to order.
E. S. BOSTON, Blacksmith. All Work in his line done neatly and to order.
JOHN H. BACON, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, and all goods usually kept in a country store.
J. W. PHILLIPS, Proprietor of "Barren Creek Springs Hotel."
W. C. MARSTERS, Physician and Surgeon.
W. J. WEATHERLY, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.
THOS. J. WINDSOR, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.
A. H. ACWORTH, Teacher and Farmer.
A. H. CALLAWAY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
J. W. BRADLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
ISAAC L. ENGLISH, Teacher and Farmer.
ALBERT M. BOUNDS, School Commissioner.
ROBERT L. LLOYD, Ship-Carpenter.
ROBERT W. HOWARD, Saloon-Keeper.





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SPRINGS







